

Women Movements in Zambia

Hilary Francis Mwale

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Development Policy Management Forum (DPMF)
United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)
P.O. Box 3001
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Tel. 251 1 515410 (DL)/443197
Fax: 251 1 515410
Email: dpmf@uneca.org
Website: <http://www.dpmf.org>

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Policy Brief

1. Objective

This case study focused on women movements in Zambia. The main purpose of the study was to investigate whether women movements have contributed to the development of democracy, especially the building of democratic leadership in Zambia. The civil society organisation selected for this case study is the Non-Governmental Coordinating Committee (NGOCC), a consortium of women NGOs.

Most of the issues raised in this study could be best summarised in the following four broad policy areas:

- Improvement of NGO – State relations;
- Women’s problems in Local Courts and the Customary Law in Zambia;
- Traditional leadership and community participation in ‘women movement’ activities and programmes both in urban and rural areas;
- Penetration of gender activities/programmes in the private sector.

2. Policy Implications

- The most important policy that the Government of the Republic of Zambia has to put in place is the “NGO Policy”. The “NGO Policy” has been discussed in a lot of gender reports and the National Capacity Building Programme for Good Governance report. If this policy is put in place, then the relationships between the civil society, government, community and the private sector will be clearly defined. This will definitely improve the NGO–State relations and thereby enhance the development of democracy in Zambia. The government has many times regarded NGO activities and programmes as the work of the opposition political parties.
- Constitutional reforms of the Local Courts and the Customary Law are long overdue. As an emerging democracy, Zambia has a huge task of eliminating all forms of discrimination against women. This is the reason why the civil society is pushing for the signing and domestication of both CEDAW and the SADC Declaration.
- The NGOCC and other women NGOs have to work on strategies on how to utilise the leadership in traditional societies and the

community. The study made recommendations for the NGOCC to make use of the House of Chiefs and Community Agents. Both recommended strategies are meant to improve participation of rural and urban communities in women or gender programmes.

- There should be emphasis put not only on the participation of the private sector in gender issues, but also the development of gender policies by them. There is overwhelming evidence that only a few private sector organisations have gender policies in place. This could be one reason why very few women in the Zambian private sector are in decision-making positions.

3. Recommendations

- i) The NGOCC has to explore and involve other leadership styles in the planning and implementation of its programmes. If NGOCC is to maintain its leadership role in gender issues across all sectors, including poor communities, it has to utilise grassroots and traditional leadership such as community agents and traditional leaders.

- ii) The NGOCC should apply new networking approaches in order to penetrate community social networks. In addition, its programmes should use an approach, such as GAD, which involves men as partners.
- iii) Past research results and this study have clearly shown that the NGOCC should put more emphasis on poverty-related programmes. Research has shown that women are the most affected by the poverty in the country. It is, therefore, recommended that programmes that will first address this need have huge returns and greater impact on women.
- iv) The private sector is another area where the NGOCC has not reached in its past programmes. There are very few private entities in Zambia that have gender policies. If the NGOCC is to widen its programmes and acquire a huge following in the private sector, it has to be seen to be doing something within the sector.
- v) The NGOCC has to break the gender barrier in traditional societies. The resistance to gender programmes by the male-dominated traditional societies is currently depriving many rural women the benefits of human rights and the various social liberties. The only way the NGOCC can

break this barrier is by first earmarking traditional leaders and the House of Chiefs. This approach will be successful because many chiefs nowadays possess basic education and are aware of gender issues.

- vi) The NGOCC has to continue advocating constitutional reforms in the Local Courts, especially in the application of the Customary Law, which is usually discriminatory to women. The Customary Law in Zambia is not written, but in many cases it favours men more than women. With the gender policy in place, the NGOCC needs to push the government through the GIDD.
- vii) The participation of the government and the ruling party in the WIP forum signifies a positive turn in the democratic development in Zambia. NGOCC has to strengthen the WIP forum and engage in dialogue with the party in government and other political parties, including NGOs.
- viii) The huge dependency on donor support is one factor that is affecting not only women NGOs, but also most NGOs in the country. This huge dependency is present at government level as well. Therefore it is recommended that the NGOCC include income-generating activities in the programmes that they are implementing. This

will ensure sustainability even after the donors decide to withdraw support. The NGOCC has to ensure that the beneficiaries are fully involved and develop leadership that will continue guiding the communities; it also should ensure sustainability of the programmes.

- ix) With most of these issues raised in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), the NGOCC should take advantage of the status quo to advocate the domestication and signing of CEDAW and SADC Gender and Development Declaration.
- x) The NGOCC should strengthen its role in gender issues by improving its links with GIDD and work closely with the 'New Deal' government in order to ensure that most of the recommendations of this and other studies are implemented.